

PHOTO-SHARING COMMUNITIES DISCOURSE: STRATEGIES AND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The article reports on the results of the research aimed at describing graphic, lexical and pragmatic means used in commentaries on photos posted to Russian and German websites "Yandex.Photos" (<http://www.fotki.yandex.ru/>), "Photo.Life" (<http://www.lifeisphoto.ru/>), "Photo.Sight" (<http://www.photosight.ru/>), "fotocommunity.de" (<http://www.fotocommunity.de/>). Theoretically, a lot of contemporary studies in computer-mediated communication do not include the linguistic research of photo sites, although this type of computer-mediated is gaining popularity in our country and abroad, alongside with twitter-communication, studies of youtube, sms- studies and other new media. While some studies indicate that linguists are not much involved in studying pictures, others suggest that the research of Flickr.com and other world-wide known photo-sharing platforms (for ex, Ipernity.com, Yandex photos) could reveal, which strategies users commonly prefer, expressing their comments to photos and which linguistic means they use to express (verbalize) their thoughts, ideas and emotions. The semantic lexical analysis of the replies was applied to reveal the borrowings and colloquial expressions. On the pragmatic level the research is based on the speech act theory to reveal the speech acts and to classify them. The study revealed that commenting on photographs, Russian and German users select one or more of the three communicative strategies: rational, emotional and creative with the emotional being predominant. Empirical evidence confirms, that the three communicative strategies (rational, emotional, creative) realized in a number of speech acts (compliment, advice, congratulation, compliment etc.) differ in linguistic means, levels of representations and concepts implied.

Key words: photo-sharing websites, photo commentaries, photo-sites users discourse, strategies, speech acts

1. INTRODUCTION

The publicly available archived records of Internet virtual communities are being analyzed for a wide variety of research questions [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7] but similarities and differences in the ways Russians and Germans comment on photographs posted on websites have not been studied.

The research was conducted to test the hypothesis that photo commentaries made by Russians contain more generalization and references to abstracts notions, while Germans prefer commenting on the quality and content of the latter. We are particularly interested in the following:

- What strategies prevail in the commentaries studied?
- In which way Russian photo commentaries differ from Germans ones?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Technical possibilities to communicate with peers online resulted in appearing a huge number of new virtual communities and Internet globalization. Photo-sharing websites as platforms where amateur and professional photographers upload their works and comment on works of others have recently become popular (<http://instagram.com>, <http://www.flickr.com/> etc.).

The data analyzed were collected from the following Russian and German photo-sites: "Yandex.Photos" (<http://www.fotki.yandex.ru/>), "Photo.Life" (<http://www.lifeisphoto.ru/>), "Photo.Sight" (<http://www.photosight.ru/>), "fotocommunity.de" (<http://www.fotocommunity.de/>).

"Photo.Sight" founded in 1999 and specializing in art photography is one of the biggest photo-sharing website communities on the Russian Internet with the collection of 3.5 billion pictures uniting 8000 users who monthly add 35000 photographs (<http://www.facebook.com/photosight.ru/info>) 700 000 users visit the website every month and comment on the pictures uploaded by its registered members. "Yandex.Photos" founded in 2007 is another popular free photo-hosting of the "Yandex" corporation, the users of which participate in photo competitions, upload and discuss photographs. "Photo.Life" began functioning in 2007 and by now has 63973 registered authors.

The German "fotocommunity.de" (<http://www.fotocommunity.de/>) founded in 2001 supporting five languages is at the moment one of the largest European photo-sharing websites. The number of photos added daily by its members exceeds 9000, on average 6000 commentaries are posted and 450 amateur photographers get registered there daily.

Based on the layout of the website, photo-site texts are classified into *captions* and *commentaries*. *Captions* are made in the photograph either by the contributing photographer (*the author(s)*) of the photo or (after the photo is uploaded) by anybody else (*the critic(s)*). *Commentaries* on the photograph are classified into *primary*, done by the critic(s), and *secondary* – done either by another critic/critics or the author. While referring to either authors or critics without distinguishing them, we use the term *users*.

The data under study are presented by the total of 2548 commentaries (1312 in Russian and 1236 in German) downloaded from the photosites indicated above. The analysis was pursued on the commentaries made on 28 (20 Russian and 8 German) photos of different genres (landscape, portrait, urban landscapes) from 2010 to 2014. The photo-models of

the photos discussed are people (adults and children), animals (wild and domestic), natural phenomena and artifacts. Each photograph received on average 94 commentaries either from 'critics' (primary and secondary) or 'authors' (secondary).

A set of NVIVO10 (qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo_add-ons.aspx) was selected for the study: NCapture was used to extract the data from the websites and save it in PDF format, node coding was applied to organize the selected data into nodes.

Pragmatic analysis and Speech Act Theory were applied to classify the types of strategies (rational, emotional, creative) selected and users' commentaries (congratulations, direct and indirect compliments, acts of advice and wish) [8; 9; 10].

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet-mediated discourse is viewed differently by modern scholars. In a number of works it is interpreted as a new type of discourse different from both written and oral, as a new speech formation [1; 2]. The German scholars [11; 12; 13; 14] specify CMC as a form of communicative interaction, mediated by a certain channel and as a form of speech. According to S. Herring, the mode of CMC as a communicative medium, is neither simply speech-like nor simply written-like. As both written and spoken discourse CMC is affected by the numerous social structural and social situational factors which surround and define the communication taking place [11]. At the moment photo-sites are examined alongside with other cyber media (SMS-communication, Twitter, blogs, e-mail-communication, chat-communication etc.) [1; 15]. The main problems studied and discussed are as follows: virtual communities and small groups communication [3], electronic genres, their classification and origin [4], speech strategies and tactics in computer virtual environment [5], overlapping of computer and other modern discourses [6], terminology problems in computer-mediated communication (CMC) [2]. Among the less investigated areas in CMC are the following: Internet dialects, the role of Internet in preservation of languages and dialects, gender differences in computer discourse [7] etc.

Photo-sites users discourse has been the object of few sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies in modern linguistics [16; 17; 18; 15]. A popular theory in German linguistics, "Bildlinguistik" (linguistics of pictures), studies images (photos and pictorial reproductions) in correlation with the texts followed and communicative environment of a speaker [16].

One of the first researchers to address the *picture-text correlation* problem was a German scholar Christina Mueller [17] who suggested an original classification of photo captions (Germ. "Notizen") based on their source (videoclips, hyperlinks to other websites and photo-sharing sites, notes, photos) and reference to the photo. She distinguishes between captions and commentaries on photos done by 'critics' stressing that commentaries are longer (average maximum 50000 characters) compared to captions (Notizen) (maximum 300 characters) and more comprehensive and use complex sentences. By 'comprehensive' the linguist means that the users give more information in commentaries compared to notes. She uses the term 'note art' to define creativeness of caption authors, and touches upon the problem of captions diversity and similarity on Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/>).

Carmen Perez-Sabater conducted a study of openings and closings of commentaries in Facebook corpus [18]. The research, aimed at observing how users' first language and culture influence the style and register of the commentary made in English, resulted in the conclusion that non-native speakers typically prefer to express their views in a more formal style. Her research has confirmed S.J.Yates' earlier hypothesis that "it is not technology which determines the form and content of CMC but the set of literacy practices which the users bring to the medium" [19].

T.I.Popova [15] was the first to introduce the Russian photosites *discourse* (Yandex Fotki (<https://fotki.yandex.ru>), Photo Life (<http://www.lifeisphoto.ru>) and Club Foto.ru (<http://club.foto.ru>)) and classify communicative strategies of Russian photosites users based on their speech behaviour types after K.F.Sedov's taxonomy of personalities (Sedov, 2002) specifying rational, emotional and creative strategies. The *rational strategy* implies assessment of a photograph parameters, recommendations to the photographer, and in some cases possible (potential) discussions on general values associated with the photograph (family, friendship, love etc). T.I.Popova argues that the *emotional strategy* users tend to comment on photos only to avoid discussing abstract notions. Their commentaries convey (non)verbal expressions of their feelings about a photograph (delight, envy, admiration etc.) and its emotional assessment. In a number of cases users refer to their personal experience, typically focusing on the place, colours, etc. of a photo. 'Emotional critics' evaluate the artistic merit of a photo, discuss its resemblance with a real life referent and use comparisons belonging to the same subject area (e.g. a lake – a puddle, a swamp). The *creative strategy* users express their ideas indirectly, often ironically and in some cases their communicative aim is to flirt or argue attempting to start interpersonal relationships. In a number of cases such users are referred to as "trolls" or "flooders", as they prefer the phatic type of communication thus amplifying the partner's opinion. The subject area of their commentaries is also considered to be of artistic merit of a photograph and its social context. In some cases they imitate substandard speech (including vernacular), use cut-in remarks similar to those of stage plays, and wear the so-called "speech masks" distancing their real "self" from the Internet identity [15].

4. STAGES OF ANALYSIS

The analysis consists of three stages enumerated with Roman figures below:

I. Collecting and extracting photographs and commentaries from a number of websites (<http://www.fotki.yandex.ru/>), "Photo.Life" (<http://www.lifeisphoto.ru/>), "Photo.Sight" (<http://www.photosight.ru/>), "fotocommunity.de" (<http://www.fotocommunity.de/>)) were conducted with the help of NVIVO10. The data summarized consist of two types: photos (typically provided with a caption/captions) and commentaries. E.g. the photo in Figure 1 (*Islandskiy slonik* Icelandic Elephant) was followed by 45 commentaries, while the photo in Figure 2 (*Haus 1*) was followed by only one commentary.

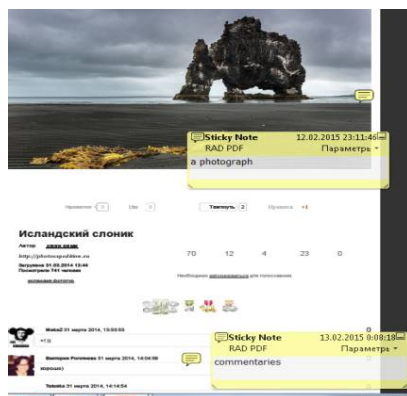


Fig. 1. *Islandskiy slonik* (Icelandic Elephant) (personal browsing)

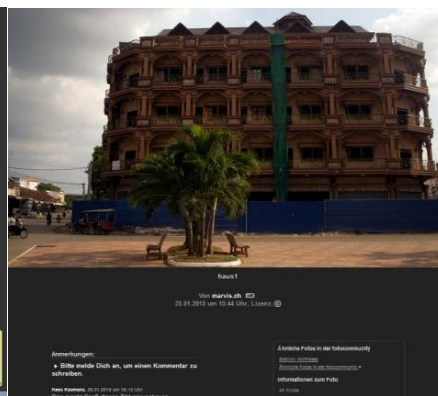


Fig. 2. *Haus1* (personal browsing)

The range of photo models is wide and include people (family members, couples, children, self-portraits, groups of people, mothers with children), domestic animals, events (Family day, parenting, shopping etc.), natural and urban phenomena (landscapes, cliffs, ice, ports etc.).

Some models provoke a number of individual, national and ethnocultural associations and generalizations. The Russian models arising reminisces include May barbecues, Russian folklore, arts, parodies on Soviet poems, mythology, phraseology, Latin sayings. In cases of the kind Russian commentaries contain numerous intertextual inclusions. Germans on the contrary only in few cases refer to precedent phenomena. E.g.: G773 *Erinnert an ein uraltes Lufthansa Werbemotiv - sehr gelungen und verdient in die Galerie eingezogen. Mein Glueckwunsch!!!* Reminds me of an old Lufthansa advertising motif - very well done and deserves being moved into the gallery. My congratulations! As we see the comment contains a reference to a historic object – an old Lufthansa advertisement shared by the German users community (fotocommunity.outdoor, see <http://rutranslate.livejournal.com/2533.html>).

As we see in the examples below the discussions followed are far beyond the photo model and address culture-specific concepts.

E.g. R625 *Сказочно красиво!!! (Сейчас расхвалим. Хозяину понравится и скажет: такая "корова" нужна самому, передумает продавать))* (Fairy-like beautiful!!! (Ready to praise it. The master is going to love it and say, that he needs "the cow" himself, and in the long run he is sure to change his mind and keep "the cow"))). [Skazochno krasivo!!! (Sejchas rashvalim. Hozjainu ponravitsja i skazhet: takaja "korova" nuzhna samomu , peredumaet prodavat'')))].

R624 *Продается!... Баба - Яга!... Телефон №13-31(Sale! ...A wicked witch!..Phone №13-31) [Prodaetsja!... Baba - Jaga!... Telefon #13-31].*

In R625 the reference is to a popular 1980-s Soviet cartoon based on a poem written by S.Mihalkov (<http://my.mail.ru/mail/natacha200910/video/1703/3148.html>), while in R624 the precedent name is that of a typical character of Russian fairy tales Baba-Jaga, an ugly witch living in a forest.

In two German examples (G1007, G773) 'critics' demonstrate the associations evoked by the photographs.

G1007 *Fantastisch, Andreas! Wie ein guter, heisser Tee am Abend eines kalten Wintertags. Fantastic, Andreas! Like a good, hot tea in the evening of a cold winter day.*

G984 *Oh ja, es strahlt eine tiefe Ruhe aus. Im ersten Moment verlockte es mich, mit den Schneeschuhen am Bach Richtung Sonne zu stapfen. Aber das wuerde leider die optische Stille durchloechern. (Oh yes, it (the photo) breathes out peace. At first, it tempted me to trudge in snowshoes to the brook towards the sun. But unfortunately that would perforate the visual silence.)*

II. Russian (1312) and German (1236) commentaries were described and classified based on their level of language presentation (structure). The range of structural parameters used in commentaries is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Diversity of Linguistic Means (level of presentation)

№	Level of presentation	Russian	German
1.	paragraphic	R 258 ++ ²	+ / -
2.	word	R1012 <i>Фантазия!!!!</i> (Fantaziya!!!!)	G800... ein Traum! (a dream!)
3.	phrase	R1021 <i>Интересный снимок!</i> (Interesnny snimok!) (An interesting shot!)	G796 <i>tolles Landschaftsbild !!!</i> (a great landscape photo!!!)
4.	sentence	R1003 <i>Он выпил море!!! :)</i> (On vypil more!!! :) (He has drunk the sea !!! :))	G860 <i>Winter ist schön! das hier beweist es!</i> (Winter is beautiful! This proves it!)
5.	text	R1244 <i>Отличная работа! Ушла прочь забота- Созерцаешь -</i>	G863 <i>Das wirkt fast schon malerisch. Eine eher selten gesehene Szenerie, so knapp vor dem Sandsturm hängt aber schon ordentlich Sand in der Luft.</i>

¹ All commentaries studied are marked with an index containing a letter ('R' for Russian commentaries, 'G' for German commentaries) and a number in the file.

² "+" typically means approval and praise, thus supporting the author, while "-" is used to demonstrate negative evaluation.

*Расслабляешься,
Отдыхаешь...
(Otlichnaja rabota!
Ushla proch' zabota-
Sozercash' -
Rasslabljaesh'sja,
Otdyhaesh'....)
(Good job!
Worries be gone –contemplating –
relaxing,
Resting..)*

*Finde ich mal eine interessante Landschaftsaufnahme.
Pro
(This looks almost like a painting. A rarely-seen scene, just before the
sandstorm, the sand is neatly placed in the air.
I find it's an interesting landscape shot.pro)*

A photograph may receive up to 250 commentaries depending on the interest demonstrated by critics. E.g., Figure 3 (below) was commented 159 times, while Figure 4 Spiegel was commented 218 times.

III. Based on the critics' strategies the commentaries registered were classified into rational (A), emotional (B) and creative (C) (see Fig.3, 4).



Fig. 3. Папа, а нафига тебе эта бленда?...
(Papa, a nafiga tebe jeta blenda?...)(Daddy, why
the hell do you need this hood?)
(personal browsing)

Commentary A. Rational Strategy (R82):... да уж,
новейшая система испытания объективов L
серии...!!! (... da uzh, novejshaja sistema
ispytaniya obektivov L serii....) (... Yeah, the latest
testing system of L series lenses....) !!!
Commentary B. Emotional Strategy (R124):
Великолепный кадр! (Velikolepnyj kadr!) (Great
shot!)

Commentary C. Creative Strategy(R56): Сам
такоу, как меня безжубого выставлять, так
горазд:))) (Sam takou, kak menja bezzhubogo
vystavljat' tak gorazd:))) (look at yourshshelf
inshtead of poshting a photograph of a
tooththless me:)))

3.a. Rational Strategy

The Rational strategy as stated above implies assessment of professional features of a photograph, its reference to a special category and recommendations to the photographer (Popova *et al.*, 2012). E.g.:

R1187 *технический вопрос, если можно:софт-фокус, как реализован? :*) (tehnicheskij vopros, esli mozhno:soft-fokus, kak realizovan? :)) *a technical question, if you permit: how did you carry out soft-focus?*

G646.. *mir gefaellt Vieles im Portfolio... klare Linie* I like many things in the portfolio... clear line

In the commentaries above (R1187, G646) 'critics' specify technical characteristics (*soft-focus*, *clear line*) of the photograph.

'Critics' comment on and criticize some elements of the photograph, the image and the model's resemblance to real objects. E.g.:

G732 *Der Flieger oben ist an der falschen Stelle. Das gibt dem Bild einenlinksdrall... Ausserdem erscheint mir der Schweif des Flugzeugs unglaublich. 1) die trails haben mehr Abstand 2) sie sind nicht so deutlich, das kommt erst nach einiger Zeit.* The aircraft above is in the wrong place. This gives the image a left twist... Besides, it seems to me that the tail of the aircraft appears unbelievable. 1) the trails have more space 2) they are not that clear, this comes only with time. 'das' (*this*) in the commentary probably means the skill or experience gained in proper time.

In most cases the criticism is accompanied by some positive evaluation of the professional sides of the photograph, combining critical aspects and recommendations to 'the author'. Grammatically it is expressed by subjunctive mood (Conditional mood (Uslovnoe nakloneniye in Russian, Konjunktiv I in German). In the following example the criticism is aimed at the photograph model only:

G436 *Phantastische Ausleuchtung, Stimmung, Gestaltung, Styling.. wenn nur - pardon - das Model nicht solch einen leicht bedeperten Ausdruck haette... man stelle sich an seiner Stelle eine ausdrucksstarke Frau mit intellektueller, charismatischer Aura vor! Trotzdem: ein Traum-Bild... Hut ab!* (Fantastic lighting, mood, design, styling.. if only - pardon - the model didn't have such a dazed look... just imagine in her place an expressive woman with intellectual, charismatic aura! Nevertheless, a dream-image... hats off!).



Fig. 4. Spiegel (Mirror)
(personal browsing)

Commentary A. Rational Strategy (G23):*Klasse Gestaltung...perspektive.* (Great design... perspective).

Commentary B. Emotional Strategy (G1037): *mag ich sehr!* (I like it a lot!)

Commentary C. Creative Strategy(G1220): *ganz und gar WUNDER.bar!!!* (totally WONDER.ful!!!)

¹ In all cases the authors preserved the spelling, punctuation and layout of the original commentaries.

To dilute the criticism 'the critic' in the example above (G436) uses the borrowed lexeme "pardon". German 'critics' apply a number of borrowed words in their commentaries to verbalize their evaluation of the photograph. E.g.:

G629 *Unique and cool im besten Sinne des Wortes!* unique and cool in the best sense of the word!

'The critic' in the commentary below (G498) refers to emoticons with the same purpose – to temper criticism. The modal word *leider* (unfortunately) is also applied in the same function. E.g.:

G498 *Wie suess und ausdrucksstark!!! Sollte man etwas Kritisches schreiben wollen, dann fiele mir nur eine Winzigkeit auf, die mich minimal stoert: das Fingerchen, das durch die Knie lukt :-)* Sehr schoene Arbeit! LG Tine P.S.: Hoffe, die Kleine hat keine kalten Fuesse bekommen... :-)

(How sweet and expressive! If you want to write something critical, then I would only mention a tiny thing that bothers me minimal: the fingers that lurks through the knees;-) Very nice work! LG Tine PS: Hope the little one has not got cold feet...;-))

R765 *Эта картинка понравилась (в отличие от той, что с царём, от той уж очень веяло клубной самодельностью:). А тут всё здорово, даже нарочито бутафорские сарафаны и прочие кокошники *вписались*!)* +X! (Jeta kartinka ponravilas' (v otlichie ot toj, chto s carjom, ot toj uzь ochen' vejalo klubnoj samodejatel'nost'ju:). A tut vsjo zdorovo, dazhe narochito butaforskie sarafany i prochie kokoshniki *vpisalis'!) +H! I like this picture, (apart from the one with the tsar, reminded me of an amateur club :-). And everything is great here, even deliberately fake sundresses and other head-band (a kind of a head-dress worn by Russian women) *fit *)+H!)

G1226 *Gratulation. Ein geniales Bild. Leider liegt der Fokus zu sehr auf den Tuerrahmen. Das Gesicht ist unscharf.* (Congratulations. A brilliant image. Unfortunately, the focus is too much on the door frame. The face is blurred).

The strategy of 'the critic' in this commentary can be defined as rational as it contains certain indications to the imperfections of the picture.

The Rational strategy on Russian sites is exemplified in direct compliments and advice. In German sites it is verbalised in the form of both direct and indirect compliments, advice, congratulation and wish.

Table 2. The Rational strategy of Russian and German photosite users

Speech acts	Russian	German
Direct compliment	R 1215 <i>Свет мягкий и обработка, обе воздушны, парят!)</i> Прекрасное фото) (Svet mjagkij i obrabotka, obe vozdušny, parjat!) Прекрасное фото) gentle light and editing, both are airy, hovering)	G 823 <i>Wunderbare...tolle sanfte Farben, eine feine Spiegelung...einfach schön!</i> Wonderful... great soft colors, a fine reflection... simply beautiful G 646... <i>mir gefällt Vieles im Portfolio... klare Linie</i> (I like many things in the portfolio... clear line)
Indirect compliment	R 1279 <i>Какой чудесный "сибиряк"¹ и как ведь классно подыграл фотографу! С фотографа причитаются!)</i> (Kakoj chudesnyj "sibirjak" i kak ved' klassno podygral fotografu! S fotografa prichitaetsja!)) what a nice Siberian cat and how masterfully he played to the photographer! The photographer owes him).	G 369 <i>Eine wunderbare Landschaftsaufnahme, diese klaren Farben und Bildgestaltung, ein Traum.</i> (a wonderful picture of a landscape, clear colours and perspective, a dream).
congratulation		G 1190 <i>Wirklich kaum zu glauben. Glückwunsch zum Stern!</i> (Really hard to believe. Congratulations on the star!) gratuliere! (my congratulations!)
advice	R 693 <i>ВАУ! Роскошно! Я бы, правда немного скдрировал. Но и так шикарно! (ВАУ! Roskoshno! YA by, pravda nemnogo skadriroval. No i tak shikarno! Wow! Posh! I would cut it a bit, but it's chic anyway!)</i> R773 <i>Сказочная получилась картинка, нравиться, но вот баян неуместен, лучше гусли. (Skazochnaja poluchilas' kartinka, nravit'sja, no vot bajan neumesten, luchshe gusli. The picture is fairy-like, appeals to me, but the bayan does not fit here, gusli would fit much more)</i>	G 498 <i>Wie suess und ausdrucksstark!!! Sollte man etwas Kritisches schreiben wollen, dann fiele mir nur eine Winzigkeit auf, die mich minimal sturt: das Fingerchen, das durch die Knie lukt :-)</i> Sehr schoene Arbeit! LG Tine P.S.: Hoffe, die Kleine hat keine kalten Fuessee bekommen... :-)) (How sweet and expressive! If you want to write something critical, then I would only mention a tiny thing that bothers me minimal: the fingers that lurks through the knees;-) Very nice work! LG Tine PS: Hope the little one has not got cold feet...;-)) G 121 <i>Quadratischer Schnitt hätte mir hier noch besser gefallen. Pro</i> (I would prefer a square cut. Pro)
wish		G 870 <i>Andreas, du verstehst es perfekt, kurze, praeagnante Texte zu deinen fantastischen Bildern zu verfassen. Ich wünsche dir weiterhin tolles Licht und Stimmungen fuer weitere fantastische Stimmungsfotos.</i> (Andreas, you understand it perfectly well, how to write short, concise text to your fantastic pictures. I wish you great light and mood for the other fantastic mood photorgaphs of you).

In indirect compliments as in R 714 the critic's admiration does not target the model (hereby the cat), as it may seem at first sight, but the photographer [8].

A number of commentaries are classified as mixed as they contain more than one type of either speech acts or strategy. E.g. R714 *Все-таки природа - лучший скульптор. Такие виды! Ну и отображение (в смысле фото) на уровне (Vse-taki priroda - luchshij skul'ptor. Takie vidy! Nu i otobrazhenie (v smysle foto) na urovne.* Nature is still the best sculptor! Such landscapes! And the image (I mean photograph) is of high quality). The commentary on R714 contains elements of rational strategy expressed in a direct compliment (Nature is still the best sculptor!! And the image (I mean photograph) is of high quality) and emotional strategy realized in admiration (Such landscapes).

In the German language a wish is commonly combined with congratulations and expressed with "Glückwunsch" (lit. "a wish of happiness"), "**wünschen**" (v. to wish) (e.g. G 870).

¹ The reference is to the cat standing on its rear paws between ice-floats in the photograph.

3.b. Emotional strategy

The emotional strategy implies verbalization of the critics' emotional responses to photos or models. The range of positive emotions is wide and include fascination, empathy, curiosity, joy, contentment, wonder, excitement. Few negative emotions (regret, disapproval etc.) are realized in speech acts of wish and advice. Emotional commentaries are typically viewers' first impressions on the models, verbalized either with meliorative lexemes or graphic signs of approval (e.g. + or !). These signs are in some cases reduplicated, that reinforces the expression of the users' emotions (see Table 1).

On the pragmatic level the speech acts of compliment and congratulation are applied as a part of emotional strategy (see Table 3).

The Emotional strategy is exemplified on Russian and German sites in both direct and indirect compliments and congratulations.

Table 3. The emotional strategy of Russian and German photosite users

Speech acts	Russian	German
Direct Compliment	R 695 <i>чудесная работа!</i> (chudesnaya rabota! A good job!)	G 807 <i>Die ganze Serie ist echt traumhaft - mein Kompliment!</i> (The whole series is really fantastic - my compliments!)
Indirect Compliment	R884 <i>Малыца гимнастка :) Понравилось фото.. и гимнастка :) (Malatsa gimnastka :) Ponoravilos' foto.. i gimnastka :) A great gymnast! Enjoyed the photograph and liked the gymnast!)</i>	G1188 <i>Was ist hier los? Jetzt ziehen ja wirkliche Galeriebilder in die Galerie ein.</i> (What is going on here? Now real gallery images appear in the gallery)
Congratulation	R682 <i>Здорово! Поздравляю отличный кадр!</i> (Zdorovo! Pozdravlyayu otlichnyy kadr! Cool! Congratulations, great shot!)	G1190 <i>Wirklich kaum zu glauben. Glückwunsch zum Stern!</i> (Really hard to believe. Congratulations on the star! gratuliere! (my congratulations!))

The most common speech act in studied Russian photo-sites is a compliment (15%), verbalized both directly and indirectly. Janet Holmes defines a compliment as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some good (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer [8]. A compliment is verbalized in the data summarized both directly and indirectly. A direct compliment is evaluates the object directly and positively (e.g. R 695, G 807). Indirect compliments are disguised in question formulas, rhetorical questions, notices of changes in addressee's appearance or his or her life in general (e.g. R1164).

A number of commentaries combine compliments and indirect advice: admiration for the author's work is followed by suggestions for improvement (e.g. R693 and G498).

Congratulation as in R682 and G1190 above are realizing a stereotypical intention of the speakers to express his emotional state and get a positive emotional response from the listener.

In G1188 'the critic' intends to compliment 'the author' and the photograph, but starts with a rhetorical question, not mentioning the photograph itself demonstrating that 'the critic' has noticed positive changes in the gallery.

The events like receiving a star or inclusion into the gallery are followed by congratulation (e.g. G 1190). The speech act of congratulation is often combined with the expression of the opinion of 'the critic' as a reply to the previous comment. E.g. G137 *gratuliere!*

diese unengen kontras, manchmal denke ich hier wirklich falsch zu sein (Congratulations! These numerous kontras, sometimes I think I do not belong here)

G140 *Diese Unmenge an Contras sind ein Zeichen von Meinungsfreiheit.*

Glückwunsch zu Bild und Galerieeinzug. (These numerous kontras indicate the freedom of expression. Congratulations on the photograph and gallery intake).

3.c. Creative strategy

The creative strategy is realized in a number of phenomena: irony, language game, phatic genres (e.g., flirt), "speech mask of a representative of a subculture". 'Critics' pursuing the creative strategy tend to use more colloquialisms, clichés, citations and ironical remarks keeping some distance from their real 'selves' (Popova *et al.*, 2012). Among the most frequent markers of the creative strategy in the data studied are rhymed commentaries are capitalized word(s) or letters in a word. E.g.:

R442 *ЧУДНЫЙ портрет замечательного человека, Надюш!.. (ChUdnyj portret zamechatel'nogj cheloveka, Nadjush! It's a WONDERful portrait of a nice person, Nadjush! (addressing a lady called Nadya with a diminutive counterpart – Nadyusha).*

G1220 *ganz und gar WUNDER.bar!!! Ig totally WONDER.full!!!)*

G 995 *groSSARTig. Glueckwunsch!* (Great. Happy wishes!)

In the first example the rhymed comment contributed to the humour of the situation. In the second example the word "art" is capitalized, the photograph is regarded by 'the critic' as belonging to "high art".

The use of graphic symbols as a part of a language game can be traced in the words marked with an asterisk (e.g. *) and a diminutive suffix. E.g.:

G 590 *Glueckwunsch zum *chen* (congratulations on a star).

Asterisk also serves a decorative function. E.g.:

G 19 **G*R*A*N*D*I*O*S. (grandiose)*

The Creative strategy is exemplified on Russian sites in direct and indirect compliments. In German sites it is presented only in the form of a wish.

Table 4. The creative strategy of Russian and German photosite users

Speech acts	Russian	Creative strategy	German
Direct compliment	R979 <i>Сейчас улетит с лебедями :) Красота...</i> (Seychas uletit s lebedyami :) Krasota... Then she'll fly with the swans It's beautiful...)		
Indirect compliment	R1164 <i>Почему ЦВЕТОК ? Я вижу здесь три ЦВЕТКА ! (Pochemu TSVETOK ? YA vizhu zdes' tri TSVETKA ! Why FLOWER? I see three FLOWERS here')</i>		
wish			G995 <i>groSSARTig. Glueckwunsch</i> (Great. Happy wishes!)

5. CONCLUSION

The range of Russian and German photo-models on the selected websites is similar (landscapes, cityscapes, countryside, individuals etc.), but the cultural differences revealed are many. Commenting on photographs, Russian and German users select one or more of the three communicative strategies: rational, emotional and creative with the emotional being predominant. The speech acts range is quite limited and include congratulation, wish, advice and compliment (direct and indirect) used to express admiration, criticism, regret etc. A compliment (direct and indirect) is the most widely presented in all studied strategies in both languages. The speech act of wish is not presented in the Russian data. Compliment and advice are typical for Russian and German websites users but the strategy and linguistic means selected culture-specific.

Congratulation is less characteristic in Russian commentaries and German 'critics' are more inclined to criticism than Russians. The list of objects of criticism includes: technical characteristics of a photograph, correlation between the image and its referent. German 'critics' try to soften their criticism using subjunctive mood and modal words, both native ("leider") and borrowed ("pardon") and emoticons. Criticism is typically accompanied by positive evaluation of some of the photographer's work.

Advice is less common and typically preceded by a compliment on both Russian and in German websites. Critics present their interpretation of the picture going far beyond the scope of what they see.

Reduplication of graphic symbols and lexemes is often applied to reinforce the effect. Isolated use of graphic symbols is frequent in both Russian and German photosites.

One of the essential aspects of Russian photosites are inter-textual inclusions in users' discourse. As inter-textual ethnocultural and national 'islands' are many and always recognized though sources are seldom mentioned we may conclude that Russian users share views on a number of concepts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors confirm that the submitted data is free of conflict of interest.

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¹ The reference is to two young ladies metaphorically called flowers and a real flower.

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